

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph on page 1, line 6, to line 11, as follows:

The present invention generally relates to the technical field of footwear, and particularly an item of footwear featuring some important improvements in relation to the ability of allowing the perspiratory moisture given off from the feet to pass through an outsole of the footwear which, is specifically designed to this purpose, while ensuring at the same time an effective ~~waterproofness~~ water-repellency.

Please amend the paragraph on page 3, line 7, to line 16, as follows:

In relation to the waterproofness of a footwear of this kind, it has been found that the leather inserts which are glued into the holes provided in the outsole of the footwear can become detached from the outsole upon repeated bending of the outsole during the normal use of the footwear. Thus, under rainy weather conditions water from the outside ambient can penetrate the footwear through the holes and cause great discomfort. Moreover, no means is provided for imparting a degree of water-repellency ~~level of waterproofness~~ to the leather inserts which are inherently hydrophilic and in a short time tend to absorb and transmit liquid water, specially in the case the outsole of footwear contacts a wet or muddy ground.

Please insert the following paragraphs after the paragraph on page 3, line 24, as follows:

Also document WO 97/28711A addresses the task of developing a breathable outsole for both normal and watertight footwear. According to this document the outsole is formed of two layers with an elastic and water vapour-permeable inner layer and an outer layer which covers less than 70% of the inner layer.

However, the use of a footwear having such an outsole construction is rather uncomfortable because the outsole is not capable of providing stability, traction and cushioning action, especially in the case the footwear is intended for leisure time and/or sport activities. Moreover, the manufacturing process of the outsole disclosed in WO 97/28711 A is rather inefficient and expensive.

Please amend the paragraph on page 4, line 2, to line 4, as follows:

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an item of footwear intended for leisure time and/or sport activities which is improved in relation to its breathability and ~~waterproofness~~ water-repellency.

Please amend the paragraph on page 4, line 5, to line 16, as follows:

Accordingly, this object is achieved with an item of footwear comprising in combination:

- an outsole consisting in a monolithic piece of synthetic material and having in its forepart at least a vent opening which is made through the thickness of said outsole,
- a grating-like element which is set into said vent opening and acts as a screen by separating and protecting the inside of the footwear from the ground which comes into contact with said outsole,
- a pliable sheet insert made from a breathable and water-repellent leather ~~waterproofed-material~~ which is embedded into the outsole and is positioned inside the outsole so as to overlie said vent opening,
- an insole made of a breathable and water-repellent leather, leatherboard or fibreboard ~~waterproofed-material~~, and
- an upper made of a breathable and water-repellent leather ~~waterproofed-material~~ or a combination thereof with synthetic materials such as foam polymers and nylon or polyester mesh bonded together in a laminated form.

Please amend the paragraph on page 6, line 3, to line 10, as follows:

The outsole 11 includes a pliable sheet insert 15 which is made from a suitable breathable and water-repellent ~~waterproofed-material~~ and is embedded into the outsole 11. The sheet insert 15 has a thickness preferably ranging from 2 to 3 mm. To ensure the breathability of the footwear, the sheet insert 15 is positioned inside the outsole 11 so as to overlie the vent openings 12 as shown particularly in Figs. 2 and 3 of the drawings. The sheet insert 15 is protected from wear and damage by the screening action of the grating-like elements 13.

Please amend the paragraph on page 6, line 11, to line 15, as follows:

As mentioned above, the material of the sheet insert 15 is selected among breathable and water-repellent ~~waterproof~~ materials which are available in the art of footwear manufacturing. Preferably, the material used for the sheet insert 15 is water-repellent ~~waterproofed~~ leather, i.e. leather which has been treated so as to improve its repellency to water.

Please amend the paragraph on page 6, line 16, to page 7, line 2, as follows:

Leather is made water-repellent by means of ~~Waterproofing of leather is a~~ process known in the art by which the leather is coated with a protective hydrophobic, i.e. water repellent compound which is formulated so as to have no effect on the natural breathability of the leather. This protective coating can be applied to leather at the tannery during the tanning process and the leather produced thereby is capable of resisting absorption and transmission of liquid water. Moreover, such treated leather has a greater strength and durability than other known synthetic breathable and waterproof materials which are adapt to be used in footwear manufacturing. The use of leather is also advantageous because, as a natural material, leather is more effective in allowing perspiration moisture to breathe than other known synthetic materials.

Please amend the paragraph on page 7, line 18, to page 8, line 2, as follows:

The insole 16 is preferably made of a breathable and water-repellent ~~waterproofed~~ leather, leatherboard or fibreboard, and is flexible and able to absorb the moisture given off in perspiring from the feet. Other suitable materials for the insole 16 are ethylene vinyl acetate, polyesters, thermoplastics, graphite, and foam polymers which may add cushioning and support to moisture control. In fact, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3 of the drawings, the insole 16 is provided with through holes 18 located in its forepart which aid to moisture breathability of the insole. The insole 16 has a thickness generally in the range of 1.8-2.0 mm.

Please amend the paragraph on page 8, line 15, to, line 19, as follows:

The upper 17 of the item of footwear 10 is made from a water-repellent ~~waterproof~~ and breathable material such as water-repellent ~~waterproofed~~ leather or a combination of materials such as water-repellent ~~waterproofed~~ leather, foam polymers and nylon or polyester mesh bonded together in a laminated form and capable of ensuring in combination breathability and water-repellency ~~waterproofness~~ to the upper.

Please amend the paragraph on page 8, line 20, to page 9, line 3, as follows:

From the foregoing it can be readily understood that the item of footwear according to the present invention obviates the drawbacks of other similar footwear known in the art. In fact, the item of footwear of the invention can be produced with a more efficient manufacturing process which requires a less number of steps. Furthermore, the item of footwear of the invention permits an optimum ventilation inside the footwear to be achieved which maintains the environment around the feet cool, dry and healthy by the use of high performance breathable and water-repellent ~~waterproofed~~ leather and synthetic materials in combination with a novel outsole contraction.